

# A Monthly Progress Report on the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth



## Labor & Economic Briefing

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Here is a summary of headlining accomplishments from the last month:

### Creating New Investments & Job Opportunities

**New Small Business Initiative Announced:** Gov. Granholm and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) announced that a total of \$1 million will be available in matching grants of up to \$15,000 each for Michigan businesses that are successful in securing federal Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grants. The Emerging Business Fund grants will be available to companies in the life sciences, homeland security and advanced automotive technology sectors that support the Michigan Technology Tri-Corridor initiative. Each year, 10 federal departments and agencies are required to reserve a portion of their research and development funds for SBIR awards to small businesses. In the highly competitive SBIR funding process, the commitment of state funding will significantly increase a company's chances of receiving federal funding. The MEDC estimates that the state's \$1 million commitment will leverage more than \$25 million in additional funding for these companies. The Emerging Business Fund is one of three new financial programs Granholm announced in the State of the State address to help entrepreneurs and create jobs for Michigan workers.



**Governor  
Jennifer M.  
Granholm**

**General Motors Breaks Ground on Delta Township Platinum Plant:** On March 9, General Motors held the formal groundbreaking ceremony for the Delta Township Platinum Plant Paint Shop facility, just outside Lansing. General Motors chose the Michigan location after the MEDC offered a job creation tax credit worth an estimated \$61.8 million over 20 years to **retain up to 2,800 Lansing-area auto workers**. The MEDC also offered other key incentives to win the project, including Economic Development Job Training grants of \$1,000 each for the retained employees. Overall the project is expected to keep more than 28,000 Michigan workers employed--jobs that would have been lost had the company chosen to locate the facility elsewhere. Upon completion, **the \$1.2 billion, 2.2 million- square-foot project** will include a body shop, paint shop, and a general assembly area, as well as a power plant and a 265,000-square-foot metal storage building, scrap house, and blank-receiving building. A regional stamping facility is already completed and operating at the site. Production at Delta Township is scheduled to begin in summer 2006. The facility will build 260,000 crossover vehicles a year on the Lambda architecture, which is designed for front-wheel-drive or all-wheel-drive vans and SUVs, but it can also accommodate assembly of vehicles built on other architectures.

**MEDC Targets New General Motors Investment in Warren:** Assistance from the MEDC has also been approved to attract new investments by General Motors that could **retain a total of 2,241 Michigan jobs**, including at least 518 jobs at the company's Warren Transmission facility. If GM approves of the \$299 million project, it would upgrade production facilities at the Warren plant to accommodate the manufacture of a new, six-speed front-wheel-drive transmission. The potential of a major investment by GM in Warren on the heels of the company's recent groundbreaking of a new \$800 million, 1.2 million-square-foot Body Shop and Assembly Plant is a positive sign of GM's continuing commitment to Michigan, which has been home to the company's headquarters since its formation in 1908. General Motors has other transmission sites that it is considering for the project. The Single Business Tax credit offered by the MEDC, worth approximately \$10.4 million over the next 20 years, helped convince the company to make the Warren facility its site of preference. The city of Warren recently approved a 12-year abatement of the company's new real and personal property taxes, valued at \$19.6 million, to further support the project. General Motors is expected to make a final decision on the project sometime this summer. An economic analysis conducted by the University of Michigan estimates that the project will result in a net state revenue gain of more than \$213 million. The analysis also indicates that \$2.9 billion in personal income would be retained by Michigan workers over the life of the credit.

**Manufacturing Business and Jobs Return to Michigan from Mexico:** Schain Mold & Engineering of Rochester Hills announced that it has won a contract for a major OEM customer that will bring machinery and production to Michigan from Mexico. The program, involving molding and sub-assembly of components, was one Schain had designed and developed 10 years ago, but for cost considerations the OEM took the program to a manufacturer in Mexico. After investing in new technology and expanding capacity, Schain was able to win the contract and bring the work back to Michigan. With the increase in production, the company expects to **hire 10 new production workers and expand its sales force**.

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**Michigan Tops Canada for 350 Manufacturing Jobs:** German-based Dr. Schneider Automotive Systems will expand in Brighton rather than at a competing site in Canada, resulting in the creation of 645 new jobs for Michigan workers, including 350 directly by the company. The company plans to invest an estimated \$26.5 million to construct a new facility for the design, engineering and production of plastic automotive components for the North American market. This project will be Dr. Schneider's first North American facility. The company considered establishing the new facility in Ontario, Canada. However, a Single Business Tax credit offered by the MEDC through the Michigan Economic Growth Authority (MEGA) worth more than \$3.1 million over the next 15 years helped convince the company that Michigan is the place to grow. The city of Brighton is expected to approve a 12-year abatement on the company's new real property tax and a six- to eight-year abatement on the new personal property. An analysis conducted by the University of Michigan estimates that another 295 jobs will be created indirectly, in addition to the 350 jobs being added directly by the company over the next five years. The project will result in a net state revenue gain of more than \$22 million over the life of the tax credit.

## Building Detroit/Urban Partnerships

**MEDC Backs Three New Brownfield Redevelopments:** A total of approximately \$647,000 in Brownfield Single Business Tax (SBT) credits was recently awarded through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) to help redevelop three brownfield sites in Detroit and Lansing. The redevelopments are expected to spur more than \$6.4 million in private investment and retain up to 35 jobs to benefit the following projects:

- **Builders Plumbing and Heating Supply, Lansing** will utilize a credit valued at \$190,000 to partially demolish an existing structure and construct a 40,000-square-foot expansion. The wholesale supplier of plumbing and heating products will invest \$1.9 million in the project, retaining 35 high-paying jobs.
- **Nailah, LLC, Detroit** plans to transform four vacant, tax reverted parcels of land near the Detroit Institute of Arts into 10 condominium units using a \$215,000 credit. The developer will invest more than \$2.1 million in the project.
- **Nailah-Brush Park Mack Development, LLC, Detroit** plans to invest more than \$2.4 million to rehabilitate a brownfield site located on Mack Avenue across from the Detroit Medical Center for redevelopment into condominium units. A credit valued at \$241,958 will help facilitate the project.

**Blighted Detroit Properties to be Transformed:** The MEDC announced that a total of \$1.1 million in Single Business Tax credits will help turn two blighted Detroit properties into retail and housing developments. The projects will spur more than \$15.7 million in private investment and create approximately 11 jobs. The two projects benefiting from the assistance are:

- **Family Dollar Stores of Michigan, Inc.** plans to construct a 10,000-square-foot store on contaminated and blighted property located in the 6300 block of West Vernor on the city's southwest side. A tax credit valued at \$77,766 has been offered to help prepare the site for new construction. The developer plans to invest more than \$777,662 to build the new store, which is expected to create 11 new jobs. The city of Detroit, through its brownfield redevelopment authority, also supported the project through tax increment financing valued at \$117,645.
- **Jefferson Park North, LLC** plans to convert 557 parcels of largely tax-reverted property into a new, 123-unit, single-family home development. The property is bounded by Charlevoix, St. Jean and Lemay streets on Detroit's east side. The developer plans to invest \$15 million in the project. The redevelopment will generate a new tax base for both the city and state, helping to stabilize property values of existing homes in the area.

**Detroit Brownfield Transformed into New Housing and Office Space:** Governor Granholm recently announced a \$130,000 Single Business Tax Credit to help convert a largely vacant downtown Detroit building located at 1322 Broadway into office space and loft apartments. The credit offered through the MEDC will spur more than \$1.3 million in private investment and create 40 new jobs.

## Encouraging Economic & Urban Development

**MEDC Offers Funding for Job-Creating Projects:** The MEDC announced more than \$658,000 in Community Development Block Grant funding last week to support public infrastructure improvements necessary for the expansion of three companies in the village of Baldwin, Bagley Township and Garfield Township. The following projects are expected to create a total of 78 new jobs and spur more than \$7.4 million in private investment:

- The **village of Baldwin** plans to utilize a \$220,000 grant for public road, water and electrical improvements for construction of a new downtown hotel and retail center. The project is expected to create 22 jobs and \$2 million in private investment.
- **Bagley Township** has been offered \$255,000 for construction of a new rail spur necessary for the expansion of A & L Iron & Metal located in Gaylord. The company collects and processes scrap metal for foundries in northern Michigan, Detroit and Chicago. The project is expected to spur \$4.5 million in private investment and create 25 jobs.
- **Garfield Township** will use \$183,427 to improve public road, water and sewer facilities for the Britten Media Group expansion in Traverse City. The company will invest \$975,000 to expand its sign and banner fabrication business, creating 30 jobs.

**Funding Supports Fruitport Manufacturing Expansion:** Fruitport Charter Township near Muskegon has been awarded \$105,000 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding to upgrade the public water system in support of the expansion of Port City Racing, a manufacturer of automotive racing parts. The expansion is expected to spur \$800,000 in private investment and create 12 new jobs. The CDBG program in Michigan is administered by the MEDC, with approximately \$50 million in funding awarded each year to help local governments make improvements that support economic development and job creation.

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**MEDC Helps Neogen Corp. Expand in Lansing:** Neogen Corp. will **create 50 new jobs** and **invest \$1.1 million** to redevelop a brownfield site in Lansing with the help of a brownfield redevelopment Single Business Tax credit provided by the MEDC. Neogen, headquartered in Lansing, is on the cutting edge of Michigan's growing life sciences industry as a marketer and manufacturer of food safety, detection and pharmaceutical products. The company plans to consolidate several operations at the newly redeveloped site located at the former Dudley Paper building on North Hosmer Street. The state tax credit is valued at \$115,000, and is in addition to city of Lansing tax abatements valued at more than \$171,000. Neogen has restored several other older Lansing buildings in recent years, helping to revitalize the city while meeting its expansion needs.

**MEDC Promotes Michigan at SAE:** The MEDC once again had a strong presence at the annual Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) World Congress in Detroit. The event was a gathering of about 38,000 of the world's most influential automotive professionals, and the leading source of information about advancements in vehicle technology. The MEDC had a prominently located 20' x 20' exhibit hall space (pictured at right), featuring 17 local partners and associations working with the MEDC to promote their services and regions with the unified message that Michigan is a great location to locate and expand a business. The booth specifically promoted the Michigan Technology Tri-Corridor and advanced technologies being developed and utilized in the state.



**MEDC Working with St. Johns to Retain Federal Mogul:** The MEDC has provided \$20,000 in Community Development Block Grant funding to help the city of St. Johns in its efforts to keep Federal Mogul from closing down its plant there due to competitive and cost pressures. The grant will be used to develop an assessment and action plan targeted toward the retention effort. An outside consultant will evaluate business factors that affect Federal Mogul's operations in St. Johns. The consultant will work with the city, local utilities, labor officials and tax authorities to compile the plan and make recommendations to the city. According to MEDC President and CEO Don Jakeway, the study is an excellent way to examine the situation from many angles and promote the collaborative effort it will take to keep Federal Mogul in St. Johns.

**Job Training Funds Support Ford's Modernization of Rouge Facility:** In support of Ford Motor Company's modernization of the Rouge Manufacturing Facility in Dearborn, the MEDC is funding technical training for 1,048 employees that will increase their skills and enhance Ford's competitive advantage in a world market. The \$1.35 million in Economic Development Job Training (EDJT) grants will enable workers to obtain training in computer-aided design, programmable logic controls, software programming, new equipment operation, and other key areas. Henry Ford Community College was chosen by Ford to provide the training. The grant is part of an overall commitment of \$3.8 million the MEDC made to encourage Ford to invest in making the Rouge plant one of the most technologically advanced production facilities in the world.

**R.L. Polk Receives Training Grant:** The MEDC has offered a \$69,000 EDJT to train 100 employees of R. L. Polk & Company in Southfield. The funding will enable workers to receive specialized training to increase their skills and enhance the company's competitive advantage. Schoolcraft College will provide the training to 50 current and 50 new employees. R.L. Polk is a global information services provider that collects and compiles lifestyle and demographic data for the automotive industry. In 2002, the company consolidated its operations in Michigan from Cincinnati, creating 100 new jobs.

**Michigan Advances in Small Tech Leadership:** Small Times magazine has named Michigan eighth in the U.S. for the development of micro- and nanotechnology, continuing the state's advancement in the race to become the nation's center for the small tech industry. Michigan's position in the annual small tech "Hot Spots" rankings found in the March/April issue is a step forward from last year's ninth-place finish. The success is partly due to the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's efforts to create new opportunities for small tech companies to grow, particularly in the life sciences, advanced automotive technology and homeland security sectors through the Michigan Technology Tri-Corridor. The MEDC has targeted other initiatives to grow Michigan's small tech industry. Last year, Michigan launched a dedicated small tech website at <http://www.michigansmalltech.com>. Small Times ranked states based on a quantitative analysis that measured their strength in six categories: research, industry, venture capital, innovation, workforce and costs. The top 10 states in the Small Times ranking are: California, Massachusetts, New Mexico, New York, Texas, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Connecticut and Ohio. The National Science Foundation projects a \$1 trillion annual market by 2015 for nanotechnology. According to MEDC President and CEO Don Jakeway, Michigan will likely reap significant economic rewards if it continues to lead the nation in small tech research and commercialization.

**Technology Tri-Corridor Field Narrowed to 131:** The MEDC has received 131 full proposals seeking the \$24 million in funding available from the Michigan Technology Tri-Corridor this year. Proposals requesting a total of more than \$176 million were received from universities, nonprofit and private research facilities, companies and individuals. The proposals include a wide range of projects, including a fuel cell commercialization incubator, an unmanned aerial vehicle for homeland security applications and a new treatment for acute renal failure. Final awards are expected to be announced in June. A complete summary of proposals is at <http://medc.michigan.org/ttc>

**Small Tech Shines at MISTA Conference:** The Michigan Small Tech Association (MISTA) held its first major conference, "Growing Michigan Business with Small Tech," at Wayne State University on March 16. Speakers, breakout sessions and opportunities for networking were among the highlights that attracted more than 125 attendees from the business, financial/legal, research and academic communities. Patti Glaza, COO of Small Times Media, gave a "Small Tech State of State" report. She also presented MEDC Technology Tri-Corridor Vice President Tino Breithaupt with an enlarged version of the magazine's cover to commemorate Michigan's advancement to number eight on Small Times magazine's 2004 Top Ten Small Tech Hot Spots list (photo right). The MEDC was instrumental in creating the Michigan Small Tech Association in late 2002 to forge partnerships and foster growth in Michigan's emerging small tech sector.



*MEDC Technology Tri-Corridor Vice President Tino Breithaupt and Patti Glaza, COO of Small Times Media.*

**Study Suggests Ways to Lower Health Care Costs:** A study released April 1 by the MEDC lays the groundwork for an action plan to reduce health care costs and insurance premiums as a way to help businesses to remain competitive. The study, conducted by Altarum of Ann Arbor, suggests that the state should redouble its efforts to promote health and disease prevention, approve legislation to promote the regulation of insurance premiums, encourage wider use of generic drugs, continue efforts to save money by forming multi-state coalitions and fully utilize the federal resources available to address the costs of uninsured and publicly insured individuals. The study also found that Michigan has the highest rates of death from coronary heart disease, ranks second for obesity and diabetes and ranks sixth for smoking when compared to any of the other benchmark states in the study. The complete study may be viewed online at <http://www.michigan.org> under "Publications and Reports."

## Helping Smaller Michigan Communities

**Six Communities Benefit from Infrastructure and Planning Grants:** The Michigan Economic Development Corporation announced that it is making more than \$939,085 in Community Development Block Grant funding available for public infrastructure improvements and community planning activities in Menominee, Pellston, Pigeon, Vicksburg and Berrien and Oceana counties. The projects are expected to spur more than \$2.7 million in private investment and lead to the creation of 87 new jobs. The projects are as follows:

- **Berrien County** plans to utilize a \$200,000 grant to replace antiquated water lines in the village of Berrien Springs. The project is expected to create 20 new jobs, improve the water quality for residents and attract future business development.

- **The city of Menominee** has been offered \$15,000 to develop a plan to help increase the occupancy of downtown buildings and market the city's historic district to visitors and businesses. The plan is expected to create fertile ground for future jobs and investments.

- **Oceana County** has been offered a \$40,000 grant to supplement an additional \$50,000 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to help determine the long-term feasibility of an incubator for the development and marketing of value-added agricultural products. The incubator is expected to encourage the creation of jobs and investment in the county through the development of spin-off business opportunities.

- **The village of Pellston** plans to utilize a \$174,085 grant to help pay for construction of a road and parking lot to accommodate construction of a new medical professional center. The project is expected to create 17 new jobs and attract more than \$1.7 million in private investment.

- **The village of Pigeon** will use a \$10,000 grant to help perform a market analysis of trends within the community, region and state to formulate a growth agenda to best utilize local resources. The study is expected to result in increased economic activity and job growth.

- **The village of Vicksburg** plans to facilitate the redevelopment of the former Fox River Paper Mill into a multi-tenant commercial center. The \$500,000 grant will fund the construction of new water and sanitary sewer facilities for the redevelopment. The project is expected to create 50 new jobs and spur more than \$1 million in private investment.

## Promoting the Michigan Tourism Industry

**Study Defines Michigan Museums' Economic Impact:** Michigan's 400 museums support 7,588 jobs and sustain a payroll of \$130 million, according to a recent study conducted by Travel Michigan, the Department of Park, Recreation and Tourism Resources at Michigan State University and the Michigan Museums Association. The study found that in 2001 there were an estimated 10.9 million paid-admission visitors to Michigan museums. Museum guests spent \$733 million on trips associated with their visits. Where a museum visit was the primary purpose of the trip, visitors spent \$334 million. The study also provides spending profiles for various segments of museum visitors and the total spending by museum visitors both in the museum and in the local community. Of the 10.9 million visitors to Michigan museums, 41 percent of the visitors spent the night after traveling more than 50 miles to the museum visited; 15 percent were day-trip visitors from more than 50 miles away; and the remaining 44 percent were local visitors from within 50 miles of the museum visited.



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**National Organization Recognizes Marshall as Unique Community:** The National Trust for Historic Preservation, the country's largest private, nonprofit preservation organization, recently announced the selection of Marshall, Michigan, as one of its Dozen Distinctive Destinations, an annual list of unique and lovingly preserved communities in the United States. According to the organization, Marshall is noted as an open-air textbook of 19th-century American architecture, with its expansive historic district boasting tree-lined streets, interesting shops and restaurants, and an inviting atmosphere that entices visitors to linger and enjoy themselves. "Marshall's distinctive sense of place opens a window into the past and offers visitors the quintessential small-town experience," said National Trust President Richard Moe. "It is a unique community rich in historic sites and cultural activities for anyone who wants to avoid the hurried pace of many better-known vacation destinations." Detailed information about Marshall for potential visitors is located on the MEDC's Travel Michigan website at <http://www.michigan.org>.

## Creating Cool: The Economy of Arts and Culture

**Michigan eLibrary 'Pathfinder' Guides Job Seekers to Best Online Information:** For those in the market for a new job — whether through layoff, reorganization, retirement or intentional career switch — the Library of Michigan has created a new "pathfinder" at the Michigan eLibrary (MeL) (<http://www.mel.org>) that is certain to make the search and preparation for work much easier. MeL's latest pathfinder, titled "Jobs, Careers, Employment and Unemployment," puts users in touch with top-quality information resources pulled directly from the MeL Internet collection. Subject links include Michigan job listings, hints for interviewing, résumé-writing tips, jobs for people with disabilities, internships, salary and wage statistics, and more. Another perk for Michigan residents is the MeL link to LearnATest, a collection of practice tests including those for civil service, GED, SAT, GRE and nursing, just to name a few. The Michigan eLibrary pathfinders take the guesswork out of researching by providing pre-determined search phrases that pull together the best information sources from across all MeL Internet categories. Users can be assured that they're viewing the most current, authoritative information available because, once a pathfinder is created, the searches within it are written to find and incorporate all added, deleted or updated sites.

**Report Looks at How School Construction Choices Affect Cities:** The Michigan Land Use Institute's (MLUI) recently published report "Hard Lessons: Causes and Consequences of Michigan's School Construction Boom" shows how Michigan's current school construction policies create long-term problems for communities. Since the passage of Proposal A in 1994, property taxes have increased dramatically and related debt has tripled from \$4 billion to \$12 billion. Over 500 new schools were built and 278 neighborhood schools closed, though Michigan's student population only increased 4.5 percent. In 1995 alone, the dollar amount of bond issues for new school construction increased 150 percent. The MLUI reports that architects and financial advisors influenced construction decisions by providing free feasibility studies in exchange for guaranteed contracts. Estimates for rehabilitating older schools were typically inflated when in reality new schools always cost more to construct. The negative impacts of new schools and the proven benefits of historic neighborhood schools have not been fully considered. Hard Lessons presents recommendations for improving Michigan's economic competitiveness and quality of life by encouraging better school construction practices. The report can be downloaded at <http://www.mlui.org>. In addition, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) sponsored a study of schools in Michigan to assist Michigan's communities in determining which of their historic schools are worthy of preservation. "An Honor and an Ornament: Public School Buildings in Michigan" is at <http://www.michigan.gov/shpo>.

## Protecting Worker Safety

**Plymouth Company is First Automotive Stamping Plant in the Nation to Receive VPP Star Award:** OSHA Assistant Secretary John Henshaw and DLEG Director David Hollister presented E&E Manufacturing Company, Inc. of Plymouth with the Michigan Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) Star Award for workplace safety and health excellence on March 23. E&E Manufacturing Company is the first automotive stamping plant in the nation, out of more than 1,000 VPP sites, to receive the VPP Star Award! Employees raised the VPP Star Flag during the ceremony. The Michigan Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) Star Award for exemplary safety and health programs is awarded by the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA). E&E's Safety Policy states, "Nothing is more important than our associates' safety."



(From left) MIOSHA Director Doug Kalinowski, DLEG Director David Hollister, OSHA Assistant Secretary John Henshaw, E&E EHS Manager Richard Shroggia, E&E Administrative Assistant Jeanne Swanson, Plymouth Mayor Stella Greene, Representative John Stewart, and E&E President and Owner Wes Smith.

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**Emerson Tool's Menominee Plant Receives State's Highest Ergonomics Award:** The Menominee plant of Emerson Tool Company, a division of Emerson, received the Ergonomic Success Award from the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA) on April 6. This is the first Ergonomic Success Award issued to an employer since 2000. The ergonomic improvements at the Menominee facility have significantly reduced the number of repetitive motion injuries for its employees. MIOSHA's Consultation Education & Training (CET) Division issues the Ergonomic Success Award to employers for instituting ergonomic improvements and substantially reducing traumatic strain and sprain injuries and cumulative trauma disorder illnesses. The Menominee plant's ergonomic improvements resulted from a total revision of its assembly processes. Ideas for these revisions came from several sources, including employees who worked in the assembly areas, injury reports, safety committee suggestions, and the company's engineering department. Emerson Tool Company is a division of Emerson focused on the manufacturing of Craftsman utility vacuums for Sears.

**MIOSHA Cites CB&I Water for Fatal Water Tower Fall with Proposed Penalties of \$110,000:** The Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA) cited CB&I Water of Plainfield, Illinois, with \$110,000 in proposed penalties on April 21 for allegedly failing to adequately protect employees from falls and other safety hazards. Three workers employed by this company in Texas, Illinois and Michigan fell to their deaths in 11 months, between Nov. 26, 2002 and Oct. 21, 2003. Most recently, on Oct. 21, 2003, CB&I Water was completing the construction of a water tower in Mason with eight workers when 22-year-old Jesse Nunez fell to his death. As a result of the accident investigation by the MIOSHA Construction Safety and Health Division, two "willful" and three "serious" violations are recommended, with total proposed penalties of \$110,000. The willful violations are for failure to monitor the activity of a new employee doing a new work task and failure to train in a specific type of rigging for fall protection. The serious violations are for failure to check the construction site for unsafe conditions, barricades not provided where material is dropped from the top of the tower to the ground, and no fall protection used when workers are exposed to falls of more than six feet. A "willful" violation is one committed with an intentional disregard of the requirements of MIOSHA regulations, or plain indifference to employee safety and health. A "serious" violation exists where there is a substantial probability that serious physical harm or death can result to an employee. Construction is one of the most hazardous industries in Michigan. There were 24 construction fatalities in 2003 — six of them caused by falls. MIOSHA construction standards require employers to have a comprehensive and implemented accident prevention program to reduce serious or fatal injuries.

## Assisting Low-Income Families & Elderly

**MSHDA Rental Projects in Ottawa & Muskegon Counties:** The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) recently announced rental housing projects in Ottawa and Muskegon counties.

**Ottawa County:** Fifty-two units of new elderly rental housing will be built in Ottawa County with the help of a \$3,934,000 mortgage loan. Stonebridge Apartments, to be located along the north side of Lake Michigan Drive in the northwest corner in Allendale Township, will consist of 13 one-bedroom and 36 two-bedroom, one-bath apartments. Unit amenities will include dishwashers, central air conditioning, individual washers and dryers, balconies or patios, and cable outlets. In addition, 31 carports will be available to residents at an extra charge. Stonebridge will be financed under the Tax-Exempt Bond Financed Program (TEAM), which offers a financing rate of 5.5 percent interest and a 35-year mortgage term. All of the units will be for households with incomes no greater than 60 percent of area median. The investment will create approximately 80 full-time, year-long jobs in construction and related trades. Initial occupancy for Stonebridge Apartments is scheduled for November 2004.

**Muskegon County:** A 150-unit family rental development will be built in Muskegon County with the help of a mortgage loan of \$8,745,000. The Reserve at Norton Shores will be located on Harvey Road in Norton Shores, Muskegon County. All units — including 30 one-bedroom, 78 two-bedroom, and 42 three-bedroom apartments — will be targeted to households with incomes at or below 60 percent of area median. The investment will create nearly 203 full-time year-long jobs in construction and related trades. MSHDA financed the loan under its Limited Obligation Mortgage Revenue Bonds "Pass Through Program," which offers low-interest loans to for-profit or nonprofit developers for new construction or rehabilitation of rental developments.

**MPSC to Hold Public Hearing on Decline in Low-Income Heating Energy Assistance Program Funds:** The Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) will hold a public hearing on the decline in Low-Income Heating Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funds. This federally funded program, administered by the Michigan Family Independence Agency, assists low-income families with energy costs. In Michigan, the LIHEAP block grant is used for the Home Heating Credit, the State Emergency Relief program and the Weatherization Assistance Program. "The Commission is concerned that the decreasing level of LIHEAP funds, coupled with higher natural gas prices, has created a critical affordability problem for many Michigan citizens," noted MPSC Chair J. Peter Lark. Public Act 141, also known as the Customer Choice and Electric Reliability Act, requires the MPSC to monitor federal funds available for low-income and energy assistance programs and to hold a public hearing when a reduction in these federal funds occurs. Michigan received \$104,047,300; \$96,519,935; and \$96,425,811 in LIHEAP funds in Fiscal Years 2002, 2003 and 2004, respectively. The public hearing on this matter will be held at 10 a.m. on May 5 at the commission office, located at 6545 Mercantile Way, in Lansing. The hearing will be legislative in nature, and any person may present data, views, questions and arguments. In addition, any person may file written comment on this matter (Case No. U-14071) no later than 5 p.m. on May 19.

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## Ensuring Quality Health Care Available for Citizens

**Commissioner Watters Petitions Court on Wellness Plan and Omnicare:** Office of Financial and Insurance Services (OFIS) Commissioner Linda A. Watters — in her capacity as court-appointed rehabilitator — announced on April 14 that she has filed petitions with the Ingham County Circuit Court seeking approval for the sale of The Wellness Plan and Omnicare. The petition seeks court approval for the sale of The Wellness Plan assets to Amerigroup and the sale of Omnicare assets to Coventry Health Care. "As rehabilitator, my major focus has been on ensuring continuity of care to plan members. In light of this, I am pleased to recommend two financially strong companies — each of which has the ability to inject significant resources into the Detroit economy — and each with proven medical management track records. I am confident that the proposals submitted represent the best opportunity for both members and creditors alike," Watters said. "Both of these publicly traded companies are well-positioned to hit the ground running." The Omnicare petition was filed with Judge James R. Giddings, while The Wellness Plan petition was filed with Judge William E. Collette. The commissioner, as court-ordered rehabilitator in charge of both The Wellness Plan and Omnicare, has overseen all post-rehabilitation payments to providers for health care services. Copies of the petition for both The Wellness Plan and Omnicare may be found on the OFIS website at <http://www.michigan.gov/ofis> in the "Who We Regulate" area.

**Commissioner Watters Slaps Ultimed With A \$200,000 Fine for Late Filings:** Office of Financial and Insurance Services (OFIS) Commissioner Linda A. Watters announced that she recently entered into a settlement agreement with Ultimed HMO of Michigan (Ultimed) for failing to file required financial information in a timely manner. The settlement required Ultimed to file outstanding quarterly statements, including required forms, its 2002 audited financial statement, and remit a \$200,000 fine on or before March 12, 2004. Ultimed submitted their quarterly and audited 2002 financial statement and a check for \$200,000 on March 12, 2004.

## Protecting Michigan Consumers

**Survey Confirms Anonymous Alcohol Sales to Minors are Major Concern:** Eighty-nine percent of Michigan residents agree that underage drinking would be a serious concern if beer, wine and liquor could be purchased through the Internet or mail, according to the Coalition for a Safe and Responsible Michigan (CSRMI), an new organization of safety, school and industry groups. The Coalition for a Safe and Responsible Michigan, a new statewide grassroots organization of safety-conscious groups and agencies, was formally announced Mar. 24 in response to the overwhelming objection by Michigan residents to unregulated alcohol sales and increased access to alcohol for minors. Coalition members include Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP), Michigan Interfaith Council on Alcohol Problems (MICAP), Student Leadership Services (SLS), Prevention Network, Central Michigan University, the Traffic Improvement Association of Oakland County, the Traffic Safety Association of Michigan (TSA), the Traffic Safety Association of Macomb County, Jackson Traffic Safety Program, the Michigan Licensed Beverage Association (MLBA), the Michigan Beer and Wine Wholesalers Association (MBWWA) and the Associated Food Dealers (AFD). The EPIC-MRA survey of 600 Michigan residents also reveals that 80 percent oppose the sale of beer, wine and liquor through the Internet or mail — with 68 percent "strongly opposing" these sales. "Michigan's current system of safeguards requires a face-to-face I.D. check — but that system is now at risk," said Nida Samona, Chairperson of the Michigan Liquor Control Commission. "Most online liquor Web sites don't confirm your birth date — all they confirm is your credit card number."

**Governor, OFIS Commissioner Propose Rule to Cut Base Insurance Rates by Banning the Use of Credit Scoring:** Gov. Granholm and Office of Financial and Insurance Services (OFIS) Commissioner Linda A. Watters proposed a new state rule on April 26th to reduce base rates for all insurance customers by banning the use of credit scoring in determining rates for homeowners and auto insurance sold in Michigan. Granholm said the announcement is the first step in her plan to address the rising cost of insurance in Michigan. To recoup the cost of offering a credit score discount to one group of consumers, insurance companies have increased their overall base rates. Since 1999, when credit scoring began to be widely used in Michigan, average automobile insurance base rates, as reported in the OFIS Buyers Guide to Auto Insurance, increased between 45 and 90 percent, depending on location. Homeowner rates increased between 86 and 152 percent. The new insurance rule would eliminate the use of credit scoring for discounts, resulting in an expected decrease in base rates of between 10 and 45 percent. "The use of credit scoring in Michigan has caused base rates to rise beyond what's affordable to many Michigan citizens," said Granholm, "especially those who do not qualify for any kind of discount. Insurance companies should be offering discounts based on the actions a consumer can take to reduce his or her insurance risk — like installing a smoke detector or buying a car alarm — not on an unrelated, unreliable credit score." Under the state's Essential Insurance Act, discounts for insurance must be applied uniformly across the state to all insured persons. In addition, rates must be based on a reasonable classification under the code. Commissioner Watters said the use of credit scoring does not meet the requirements of a valid discount under the act. "The unreliability of the data in credit reports alone violates the intention of the Insurance Code," said Commissioner Watters. Michigan would become the first state in recent years to completely ban the use of credit scoring in determining home and auto insurance premiums. California has banned it for setting auto insurance rates, and Maryland has banned using credit scores to determine homeowner's insurance rates. According to a national report, more than 90 percent of automobile insurance companies use credit scores to set rates, while an increasing number of homeowners' insurance companies are following suit.

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**MPSC Chair J. Peter Lark Announces MPSC Reorganization:** Michigan Public Service Commission Chair J. Peter Lark, with the support of his fellow Commissioners, announced a reorganization on April 12 at the MPSC. The reorganization adds the Regulated Energy Division, a division dedicated to overseeing all functions related to regulating electric and natural gas utilities, including an accounting and auditing section, a rates and tariff section; an Act 304 (the law governing recovery of natural gas costs and the cost of fuel for purchased power) and sales forecasting section; and a financial analysis section dealing with rates of return.

"This reorganization locates all the functions involved in the regulation of utility rates within one division," said Lark. "It reflects the importance of the MPSC's core goal - the regulation of utilities. I am confident that this reorganization will help the MPSC carry out its mission - to make sure that Michigan's regulated utility services are provided in an efficient, reliable and safe manner. Michigan's citizens deserve the most effective regulation possible, and this reorganization is a large step in that direction." The reorganization brings the number of divisions within the MPSC to six. The other divisions are: Regulatory Affairs; Customer Support and Motor Carrier; Engineering and Service Quality; Competitive Energy Division; and Telecommunications. Lark added the reorganization does not reduce employment levels at the MPSC and that several new positions will be added to deal with increased work load. The new organizational chart can be found here: [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/orgchart4-12-04\\_88347\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/orgchart4-12-04_88347_7.pdf).

## Promoting Energy Efficiency & Protecting Resources

**Five Builders Receive Federal Grants to Construct and Promote Energy-Efficient Homes:** Five Michigan builders have been

awarded grants from the Energy Star Home Grant Program to build energy-efficient houses. DLEG Director David Hollister presented the grants of up to \$8,000 to the builders at Urban Options Energy & Environmental Demonstration House in East Lansing. Builders compete for the U.S. Department of Energy-funded grants based on energy-efficiency, marketing plans and innovations. Rated by the DLEG Energy Office on a scale of 1-5 stars, each house required a Five Star rating based on the National Home Energy Rating System to be eligible for the grants. Home energy ratings help buyers identify energy-efficient homes as well as understand energy costs and how to lower them. The recipients are: **Healthy Building Group, Inc. – Okemos** (Efficiency Rating: 92.1), Project Location: Flint; **Homeland Builders of Michigan – Novi** (Efficiency Rating: 90.0), Project Location: Flint; **J.W. Building – Lake Orion** (Efficiency Rating: 86.3), Project Location: Birmingham; **Pierson-Gibbs Homes, Inc. – Richmond** (Efficiency Rating: 90.0), Project Location: Rockford; and **White Pine Residential Energy Services, Inc. – Traverse City** (Efficiency Rating: 89.3), Project Location: Traverse City. For more information, visit: <http://www.michigan.gov/energyoffice>.



*Director Hollister presented the U.S. Department of Energy-funded grants to five builders to build and promote energy efficient homes. Innovative features in the proposed homes include: solar roof systems and soybean-based insulation.*

**MPSC Issues Order to Avoid Power Disruptions:** The Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) issued an order on April 5 requiring electric companies in Michigan to review and, if necessary, make operating changes to avoid future power disruptions such as those that occurred during the Aug. 14, 2003 blackout. The MPSC order follows the release of the final report by the U.S.-Canada Power System Outage Task Force on the blackout. The report found that the sensitivity of various relay settings on the transmission system contributed to the spread of the cascading blackout. However, the report also notes that the relays were not intended to protect systems other than their own. The appropriate relay setting is a new concern that had not been previously identified in the U.S.-Canada interim report released on Nov. 18, 2003. "We previously concluded that Michigan's electrical companies did not cause the August 14 blackout, and the bi-national report released today verifies that," notes MPSC Chair J. Peter Lark. "But the final report identifies a new concern with the operation of electric transmission relays in Michigan and Ohio. The Michigan Public Service Commission intends to make sure that these relays do not play a part in any potential future blackouts. That is why we are directing Michigan electric companies to analyze their relay settings and make any necessary corrections." The order directs all electric utilities and transmission companies operating in Michigan to analyze and, if necessary, make operating changes to their impedance relay settings to minimize the likelihood of future cascading outages. The utilities and transmission companies are directed to submit reports on their findings and actions by May 10. These reports should also include responses to the findings of the bi-national report, especially related to impedance relay settings.

**MPSC Issues Order Expanding Requirement of Electric Assessments to Include All Remaining Electric Utilities in Michigan:** The MPSC issued an order on April 5 expanding its earlier order that required electric assessments to now include all additional electric utilities. The order also requests that alternative electric suppliers (including electric utilities' affiliates) and Wolverine Power Supply Cooperative to file similar assessments voluntarily. The assessments are due by May 14. MPSC Chair J. Peter Lark said, "As we approach the peak electric demand of the summer months, it is imperative that all of Michigan's electric utilities and alternative suppliers be able to meet that demand." In its Jan. 22, 2004 order, the MPSC required Consumers Energy Company, the Detroit Edison Company and Indiana Michigan Power Company to file assessments of their ability to meet customers' expected electric requirements in 2004.



**Belding Area Schools District Receives ENERGY STAR Building Label:** Belding Area Schools received the ENERGY STAR Building Label for Orchard Hills Elementary School on April 16. The Wyandotte and Grandville Public Schools are the only other school districts in Michigan that have achieved this standard. The ENERGY STAR Building Label is awarded to buildings that exhibit high-energy efficiency without sacrificing occupant safety and comfort. Labeled buildings receive national recognition for their energy performance. Orchard Hills Elementary will receive a bronze plaque from U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to mount in the building entrance visible to occupants, visitors and community members. The Belding Area Schools district has been working toward energy-efficient buildings for more than 15 years. They continue to work with their staff, students, architects and local contractors to keep their buildings operating safely, comfortably and efficiently. ENERGY STAR is a voluntary partnership among government, business and individuals that cooperate to protect the environment for future generations by implementing energy-efficient practices today. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) jointly sponsor the ENERGY STAR program. Last year alone, ENERGY STAR helped businesses and consumers save more than \$5 billion in energy costs while reducing greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to those generated by 10 million cars. For more information visit: <http://www.energystar.gov> or <http://www.michigan.gov/energyoffice>.



**Robert Schrauben, Belding Area Schools Director of Facilities, accepts the Energy Star plaque from Brandy Minikey - Energy Office.**

## Providing Workers Compensation Services for Businesses & Employees

**Workers' Comp for Illegal Aliens? Court to Decide:** This spring the Michigan Supreme Court will hear the appeal in two workers' compensation cases involving the issue of illegal aliens. The Court of Appeals had ruled earlier in the consolidated cases of Sanchez and Vazquez vs. Eagle Alloy, Inc. and Second Injury Fund that both documented (legal) and undocumented (illegal) aliens are employees under the definition of the Workers' Disability Compensation Act. The court also said, however, that wage loss benefits could be suspended once it was discovered the employees had used false identification to obtain employment. The law says an employer is not liable for compensation for those periods when the employee is unable to obtain or perform work because of imprisonment or commission of a crime. David Sanchez was injured on the job when a press machine crushed his hand. He received workers' compensation benefits. After returning to work, Sanchez was fired when his employer discovered Sanchez was an illegal alien. The employer also refused to pay wage loss benefits. Sanchez applied for a hearing and the Funds Administration was brought into the litigation because he was working two full-time jobs when injured. The Dual Employment Provision of the Second Injury Fund would reimburse the carrier an apportioned share of the weekly benefits derived from the wage loss of the second employer. The Supreme Court will be deciding whether undocumented aliens are employees covered under the Workers' Disability Compensation Act and will also determine if they are entitled to wage loss benefits.

**Governor Names Chairs for Board of Magistrates and Appellate Commission:** Gov. Granholm has named chairpersons for the Workers' Compensation Appellate Commission and the Workers' Compensation Board of Magistrates. William G. Reamon, Jr., Grand Rapids, will chair the Appellate Commission, while Jack Nolish, Huntington Woods, will head up the Board of Magistrates.



**William Reamon**



**Jack Nolish**

## Cutting Through Red Tape for Businesses & Workers

**New Features Added to Michigan Talent Bank Improve Services to Job Seekers and Businesses:** New features recently added to the Michigan Talent Bank (MTB), the state's Internet-based public job-matching system, have improved services to both job seekers and businesses. The Michigan Talent Bank can be accessed at the Michigan Career Portal at <http://www.michigan.gov/careers>.

The features added to help job seekers include the ability to:

- Enter functional resumes (those that allow for the description of skills, knowledge, and abilities) in addition to the existing chronological format resumes into the MTB.
- Add specific job listings to their own "shopping carts" to save for future consideration.
- Annotate which jobs they have applied for, on which date, and by which method (e-mail, fax, mail, etc.)
- Indicate their availability for work based on a city or zip code location, and the miles they are willing to commute.

The features added to help businesses include the ability to:

- Create up to three shopping carts, save 25 resumes to each cart, and peruse them later if desired.
- List the city location of their job listings and automatically replicate a job listing to six additional locations without re-entering the job listing information.

Other enhancements to the MTB include upgrades to its hardware and software, which will improve system performance and reliability. Satisfaction with the MTB has been consistently high since it made its debut in 1998. A January 2004 survey indicated that of those who responded, 84 percent of job seekers and 94 percent of businesses were satisfied.



*Workers' Compensation Agency staff involved with the EDI project are: (left to right) Ted Day, Lori Raby, Deb Vincent, Liz Huerta, Julie Lenneman, Satish Chidura, Kathy Rademacher, Craig Petersen and Varla O'Berry.*

time and expense of manually producing and filling out the forms.

**Workers' Comp Moves to Exchanging Files Electronically:** The Workers' Compensation Agency took a significant step forward in its efforts to reduce the flood of paperwork. The agency's Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) project has successfully received its first electronic file containing Form 114's. The file, which General Motors submitted, contained 832 records of cost-of-living adjustments (COLA). Only five of the records were rejected because of errors. The forms are sent to the Compensation Supplement Fund, which reimburses carriers for COLAs on certain workers' compensation claims with dates of injury between 1965 and 1979. With the successful file transmission, the agency will now work with other large insurance carriers and self-insured employers to have them electronically submit the 114 forms. The goal is to have 75 percent of the Compensation Supplement Fund requests submitted electronically. The project will then move on to the electronic submission of proof-of-coverage forms by June 30, 2004, before having injury and payment reports submitted electronically. While participation is voluntary, we expect that EDI should produce significant savings for carriers and self-insureds as well as the agency by greatly reducing the

## Assisting Businesses & Jobless Workers

**Unemployment Insurance Agency Examining Tax Avoidance:** The Unemployment Insurance Agency is establishing a three-member unit that will examine tax records to see if employers are trying to avoid paying their legitimate UI tax rates by forming shell companies. The practice is called SUTA (state unemployment tax act) dumping and is shifting between \$50 and \$100 million per year in unemployment taxes onto Michigan employers who pay their fair share of the tax. Once the unit is established, the investigators will look at the problem, identify employers who are SUTA dumping and offer recommendations for changes to the state UI law and rules.

**Employers Can Still Apply for Federal Tax Credits:** Although Congress has not yet approved continuation of two popular federal tax credits, the Unemployment Insurance Agency is still advising employers to apply for the credits through the agency. The Work Opportunity (WOTC) and Welfare to Work (W2W) Tax Credits ended on December 31, 2003, but the agency expects Congress to extend the credits sometime in early 2004. Employers become eligible for the credits if they hire workers who fall into any of nine targeted groups that typically have difficulty in securing employment. Employers can earn up to \$2400 through WOTC and up to \$8500 through W2W. In 2003 the potential tax savings through the two programs for Michigan employers was \$50 million.

## Addressing Wage & Hour Issues

**Prevailing Wage Policy Updated:** A number of key changes have been made to Michigan's Prevailing Wage policy. These updates have helped to clarify some of the policies. Among the changes, third parties, such as union representatives, are now allowed to file prevailing wage complaints on behalf of workers on the job site. The policy has also been updated to use the same guidelines for defining apprenticeships as used by the federal Bureau of Apprenticeship Training. In addition, prevailing wage policy has changed to prevent employers from allocating a worker's total fringe benefits in such a way as to avoid payment of the prevailing wage. Another change within the prevailing wage arena is the use of ongoing wage and fringe benefit surveys instead of an annual survey. The past once-a-year surveys delayed wage and fringe benefit changes. The new survey process is faster, accepting wage change information as it is provided, making the survey more current and accurate. To learn more about the division and the programs it administers, look for Wage & Hour Director Jack Finn on the May edition of the Job Show, which airs on cable systems around the state.



*Jack Finn, Wage & Hour Division director (right) is interviewed by Chris Hamstra, host of the Job Show about the programs his division administers.*

## Providing Career & Workforce Development Resources

**Michigan Commission for the Blind (MCB) Mini Adjustment Program Held in Ann Arbor March 7-12:** The second MCB Mini-Adjustment event of 2004 was held in Ann Arbor March 7-12 at Weber's Inn. Forty workshop participants were introduced to a variety of skills of blindness such as cane travel, Braille, managing time and money, and other skills to enhance independence. The event also included a one-day Employment Readiness Seminar, serving seven MCB consumers to assist them in enhancing their work preparation skills, including resume writing and interviewing techniques.



*Left to right, conference participant Dr. Don Tuski, President of Olivet College; featured speaker former State Senator John Schwarz, M.D.; and KCP program administrator Rudy Redmond pause between conference events.*

**King-Chavez-Parks (KCP) Initiative and GEAR UP Michigan Host Equity in the Classroom Conference March 14-16:** The King-Chavez-Parks Initiative and GEAR UP Michigan (both of DLEG's Postsecondary Services) joined 15 public and private universities in hosting the 14th annual Equity in the Classroom Conference March 14-16 at Michigan State University's Kellogg Center. The annual conference focuses on achieving parity in enrollment, retention, and graduation for underrepresented minority students and academically and economically disadvantaged students in higher education. This year's approximately 330 attendees included college and university faculty, department chairs, faculty search committees, deans, administrators, and others interested in encouraging students to enroll in and graduate from postsecondary educational institutions.



*MSU President  
Peter  
McPherson*

*Speaker Dr.  
Charles Willie,  
Harvard*

**Partnership Forum Lays Groundwork for Creativity:** Seeking to enhance coordination with key partner agencies, Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) hosted a Partnership Forum in Lansing March 31 with representatives from seven different community agencies. "We recognize that we can't do vocational rehabilitation alone," said MRS State Director Jaye N. Balthazar. "Our partners are key to what we do, and we must include them in our planning. This forum is the beginning of a dialogue to face issues collectively," she said. "We must explore creative solutions to be more successful with our customers and continue this dialogue into the future." She noted that "MRS does not have the resources to do it all. There are many more folks who need services than we are capable of serving. We are trying to stretch our resources because the demand is increasing. We have key partners who can handle some services more effectively than we can." More than 100 persons attended the daylong event, representing MARO Employment & Training Association, Michigan Works! Association (MWA), Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), Michigan Association of Centers for Independent Living (MACIL), Michigan Rehabilitation Council (MRC), Department of Community Health (DCH), and Community Mental Health (CMH), as well as MRS. Department of Labor & Economic Growth (DLEG) Deputy Director Dennis Sykes addressed the attendees, emphasizing that Governor Jennifer Granholm and DLEG Director David Hollister "have a tremendous interest in the challenges you all face." Helping to set the stage for the day's agenda, representatives of five organizations held a panel discussion of their respective missions, challenges, services, and issues. Participants were Beth Harvey, SILC; Irene Kaziecvko, DCH; Linda Kinney, MWA; James Magyar, MACIL; and David Price, MARO. Much of the day was devoted to small group discussions of the following issues, which were identified prior to the forum in an issues sweep: appropriateness of referrals, timeliness of services, allocating limited resources, maintaining a quality and consistent employee base, balancing advocacy and mission-based roles, implications of addressing customers; and individualized needs as balanced with the efficient use of limited/restricted funding. "This is the beginning of working with our partners to identify priorities. We will then determine program priorities," Balthazar said.

**MRS Assists Michiganians with Disabilities into Employment:** A total of 868 Michigan residents with disabilities found jobs in March after receiving employment-related services from Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS), according to Jaye N. Balthazar, MRS State Director. In addition, 212 Michigan businesses were provided with disability-related services during March. MRS employer services include help with retaining at-risk workers and consultation on job-site accommodations.

**MCB Participates in Macomb ISD Career Day:** The Michigan Commission for the Blind's Consumer Services East Region staff participated in a career day coordinated through Macomb County Intermediate School District (MCISD). The activities of the career day demonstrated the importance of involvement in transition activities within the school districts.

**Workforce Transition Section (WTS) Assists Employers and Displaced Workers:** In the last month, the Workforce Transition Section (WTS) responded to 31 notices of planned plant closures or mass layoffs in the last month through 11 rapid response meetings took place with employers and union representatives in response to receipt of a Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) notice, letter, phone call, newspaper article, or other means of notification. A brief overview of available dislocated worker services was given, and depending on the number of jobs impacted, a formal on-site Rapid Response Team Meeting was scheduled or arrangements were made for the local Michigan Works! Agency to meet with the affected employees to provide information on available services. Other services provided:

- Responded to 128 phone calls and 21 e-mails from individuals, company/union representatives, and service providers who requested information or clarification of issues related to the WARN Act and dislocated worker services.
- Attended two worker orientation sessions (employee information meetings).
- Participated in 12 Joint Adjustment Committee (JAC) meetings which are been established to provide a more proactive, participatory response to large plant closing or mass layoffs.



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**Papermaking Business is Launched from ISD Training Program in Traverse City:** Looking for some stylish and distinctive stationery? The staff at Michigan Rehabilitation Services' (MRS) Traverse City office will be happy to tell you about Paperworks Studio, a nonprofit papermaking business that provides jobs for MRS clients in the five-county Grand Traverse area. The business, which has just opened its new facility in Traverse City, is an outgrowth of a vocational training program offered by the Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District. For 12 years, special education students there have created a line of handmade stationery, invitations, and other custom paper products from recycled materials. Local stores have supported the program by carrying the products. Now Paperworks Studio has its own production facility and staff, giving graduating students a chance to move into real paying jobs and use the skills they gained at the ISD. MRS is one of several partner agencies pledging to ensure the success of the venture, said Bill Colombo, youth transition counselor at the MRS Traverse City Office. "We are helping to cover the training costs for up to 36 students each year at the ISD," he said. Other exciting things are happening with Paperworks Studio, too. The project has received a big boost from Borders Books & Music, which has just begun test marketing the stationery in its 14 Michigan stores. If sales are strong, said Mimi Spaulding, program coordinator with the ISD, Borders plans to introduce the line at its top 50 stores throughout the country. In addition, representatives of Paperworks Studio recently attended a trade show in Chicago, where its line was among 30 new and distinctive products selected for the show's "Chicago Choice Award" from more than 700 entries.

**Commission on Spanish-Speaking Affairs (COSSA) Hosts Conference:** The Commission on Spanish-Speaking Affairs co-sponsored the 2004 Latino Youth Conference that was held in March at Grand Rapids Community College. The theme was "Latinos Ayer, Hoy y Siempre," or "Latinos Yesterday, Today and Always." Approximately 800 Latino students attended. This was the fifth year the conference was held. The purpose of the conference was to:

- Develop and empower Latino youth leaders through education
- Introduce Latino youth to resources available to pursue postsecondary education
- Foster mentoring relationships between Latino adults and youth
- Unite Latino youth in western Michigan

**Office of Adult Education Sponsors Three Professional Development Sessions for Teachers:** The Office of Adult Education sponsored three professional development sessions in February titled: *Reading – Taking Adult Education Students to the Next Level*. The Adult Reading Component Study conducted by the National Institute for Literacy identified specific areas in which teachers should focus their reading instruction, including word attack, word recognition, spelling, oral reading (accuracy and rate), word meaning (listening and expressive), background knowledge, and silent reading comprehension. Participants in the full-day sessions focused their efforts on strategies and resources to help students improve their reading effectiveness and efficiency. The sessions were designed for teachers in Adult Basic Education, GED, and/or adult high school completion programs.

**First Gentleman Presents Seminar at MRS' School for Leadership:** Michigan's First Gentleman Daniel Mulhern presented a seminar on leadership and integrity at Michigan Rehabilitation Services' School for Leadership program held recently in Lansing. About 100 MRS staff attended the professional development event. Mr. Mulhern, who is writing a book about leadership and integrity to be published later this year, said leadership "is always about moving people to something better. It is always about inspiration." He noted that real leadership comes from practicing it all the time. "Celebrate and learn from your mistakes," he said. He noted that the four qualities people want most in their leaders are that they be honest, forward thinking, inspiring, and competent. "Leaders with integrity act their values," he said.



*A number of staff who are "alumni" of MRS's School for Leadership attended the First Gentleman's seminar. From left: Merretta Weddington, Alexa Matthews, Daniel Mulhern, Bob Smith, Leonard Meisel, Winona Potter, Anahita Lord, Terrie Hylton, and Gwen Turner.*

## Serving at National Level

**Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns Executive Director Elected to UCP Board of Trustees:** United Cerebral Palsy (UCP), a leader in national disability issues, announced the election of Duncan Wyeth to its board of trustees at the organization's annual conference in Boston. He was elected with actor William H. Macy and a slate of 13 other experts in the fields of health care, finance, law, public policy and philanthropy. Duncan Wyeth is the director of the Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns. He has been a consumer advocate for disability issues for over 30 years, serving in a wide range of professional and volunteer roles in both the State of Michigan and nationally. Mr. Wyeth has served on the Board of Directors of the United States Olympic Committee, the National Association of Protection and Advocacy Services (NAPAS), the American Association of People with Disabilities and United Cerebral Palsy Associations. He co-founded the Coalition on Sexuality and Disability and was chair of the Michigan Commission on Handicapper Concerns. Inducted into the Michigan Athletes with Disabilities Hall of Fame in 2001, he is a tireless proponent of athletics and people with disabilities. In 1995 he co-authored a chapter on cerebral palsy for *Sports and Exercise for Children with Chronic Health Conditions*. The United Cerebral Palsy Board of Trustees, in addition to its fiduciary responsibilities, oversees the long-term strategic vision and policy of the organization consistent with UCP's mission to advance the independence, productivity and full citizenship of people with disabilities through an affiliate network.



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**Green Named Officer for International Code Council Board:** Henry L. Green, director of the Bureau of Construction Codes & Fire Safety, has been appointed secretary/treasurer of the International Code Council Board of Directors. He was elected to the International Code Council Board in 2002 and previously served on the board from 1994 to 1998. Green also is chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Institute of Building Science. He is a recipient of the Automatic Fire Alarm Association Man of the Year award and the Building Industry Association of Southeast Michigan Distinguished Service to Government award. The International Code Council, a membership association dedicated to building safety and fire prevention, develops the codes used to construct residential and commercial buildings, including homes and schools. Most U.S. cities, counties and states that adopt codes choose the International Codes developed by the International Code Council. The International Code Council also provides technical and educational services to the construction industry. The International Code Council is the result of the consolidation of what were the nation's three model code organizations: Building Officials and Code Administrators International (BOCA), International Conference of Building Officials (ICBO) and Southern Building Code Congress International (SBCCI).



*Henry Green takes the oath as the secretary/treasurer of the International Code Council Board.*